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RARE II: PROSPECTS FOR THE FUTURE

Nancy asked me to tell you about what lies ahead for RARE II. But after looking at your schedule for these two days, let me suggest that you will be talking with many people who will have every bit as much influence as I on the future of our RARE II proposals.

The Department of Agriculture has brought RARE II to the point where our final proposals will go to the President later this month. And by mid-April, the future of these proposals will rest in the hands of the Congress--in the capable hands of people such as Mr. Coelho, Senator Hatfield, Mr. Foley and others whom you will be talking with during your time in Washington.

Of the 62 million acres involved in the final RARE II decision which we issued January 4, USDA has recommended 15 million acres for wilderness designation. We have proposed that 36 million acres be administratively allocated for multiple uses other than wilderness. And we have asked the Forest Service to do some further planning on the remaining 11 million acres before the uses of those areas are determined.

I noticed that most of you here hail from California--and that is where most of your forest products operations are based--so let me give you the RARE II breakdown for California. In California, we have allocated 899,000 acres to wilderness, 2.5 million acres to non-wilderness, and slated further planning for another 2.6 million acres. In a few minutes, I will review the impacts of that proposal. But first, let me describe what will be done with the areas in each allocation.

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Remarks of Dr. M. Rupert Cutler, Assistant Secretary of Agriculture for Conservation, Research, and Education to the Bendix Legislative Seminar, Washington, D.C., on March 8, 1979.

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We will manage those areas recommended for wilderness to preclude all development other than that mandated by law or other legal rights over which we do not have discretionary authority. We will protect the wilderness potential of those areas until the Congress has made its decision.

On areas allocated to multiple uses other than wilderness--the so-called "nonwilderness" areas--we will permit activities which have been adequately covered by existing plans until new plans can be prepared. Uses of these lands may range from extensive uses with minimal impacts--such as improving wildlife habitat and enhancing range productivity--to more intensive activities such as timber harvesting, motorized recreation, and water developments.

In 1976, the Forest Service agreed to a request by a Congressional committee that it delay development of inventoried roadless areas by 90 days while Congress is in session, to give the appropriate committee chairman an opportunity to request a delay of development as scheduled hearings could be held. We are honoring that commitment. These areas allocated for nonwilderness use will become available for such activities after April 15.

I am personally committed to that date. It's time to make decisions on how these areas will be used. We have made those decisions. Now we must implement them.

During one of our briefing sessions on Capitol Hill, some suggested that we develop an "index of controversy" for these areas allocated to nonwilderness, and develop the most controversial areas last.

We won't tie ourselves to that, though I have encouraged the Forest Service to use common sense in scheduling some of these more controversial areas for harvest or other development. The reason we won't tie ourselves to any "index of controversy," is because in some areas where land has been deferred for wilderness study, we have been concentrating harvesting in other areas, so as to maintain the economic viability of some of these communities.

You know that we can't continue to do that for long. We will need to promptly harvest in a few of these more controversial roadless areas, and I have protected that option. But I have also assured several congressional committees that we will not have the bulldozers lined up on the boundaries of these areas on April 16--that we will use common sense as these areas are slated for development.

As we prepare the "first generation" of land management plans for these areas under Section 6 of the National Forest Management Act, wilderness will not be among the alternatives considered--RARE II was the mechanism for considering that option.

But in "second generation" land management planning--as these initial plans are subsequently revised or updated--"nonwilderness" areas and other areas which are then essentially undeveloped will again be considered for possible wilderness designation.

That is a logical and necessary consideration. We can't progressively limit the land-use options available to us over time. That would severely hamper our flexibility in adapting land use to the evolving desires and expectations of the American people.



There has been some speculation about a possible legislative designation of nonwilderness to dampen anticipated litigation as we begin to manage some of these areas for nonwilderness use, and to prevent subsequent "nibbling" of these lands by additional wilderness proposals. We hope Congress won't be so inclined, as that would also limit the flexibility we need to adapt to the future.

That is a can of worms. Remember Zymurgy's First Law of Evolving Systems Dynamics: "Once you open a can of worms, the only way to recan them is to use a larger can."

As for the 10.8 million acres where further planning is needed, these areas will remain essentially undeveloped until forest land and resource management plans or other project plans can be completed. The National Forest Management Act requires that each National Forest have one of these plans by 1985, and that these plans be developed using regulations which we will soon reissue as a final draft. We have optimistically set 1983 as a date to get the planning job done, though--Chief McGuire has set that target. And we will complete the planning on many of these "further planning" areas before that.

Some of these "further planning" areas are Congressionally mandated "Wilderness Study" areas which will require Congressional action before they can be declared wilderness or developed for nonwilderness uses. Most of these "Wilderness Study" areas, though, need only a local hearing before they can be cleared for that action.

Our RARE II proposals are now going through the Federal interagency review which must precede a legislative proposal. And concurrent with that review, Secretary Bergland has invited Members of Congress and Governors of affected states to counsel with him about RARE II. They have until March 15--another week--to share their thoughts with the Secretary.



After that deadline passes, we will promptly prepare the final USDA legislative request, which will incorporate the RARE II wilderness recommendations and our previous recommendations on the primitive areas. The Office of Management and Budget has indicated that there will be two weeks or so, while it completes the interagency review, before the proposal can be sent to the Congress.

As you know, President Carter has announced that in 3-4 weeks he will send to the Congress a plan to consolidate Federal natural resource programs. The plan provides for a single Department of Natural Resources which would include the Forest Service from USDA, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration from the Department of Commerce, and all functions of the Department of the Interior.

This new Department of Natural Resources would contain four major administrative units:

- 1) Oceans and atmospheric resources;
- 2) Public lands, forests, and water resources;
- 3) Resource sciences and data; and
- 4) Parks, recreation, heritage and wildlife.

We don't expect this proposed reorganization to alter the schedule we've estimated for getting these RARE II legislative proposals to the Congress. Congress will probably receive them by mid-April.

That will then set the stage for another round of public involvement as Congressional hearings begin. As to whether Congress will legislate for all proposed wilderness areas through a single nationwide omnibus bill, enact omnibus wilderness legislation for each State, or deal with these areas in some other fashion--perhaps that's something you can ask this afternoon. We would certainly hope that Congress can and will take up the entire RARE II package over a relatively compact time frame.



If Congress approves the areas we recommended for wilderness--if the RARE II allocations are implemented as we propose--how will that affect the Bendix Forest Products Corporation?

Nancy asked me to review that impact, but let me suggest that those of you whose operations are affected by RARE II have already assessed that impact for yourselves. I suspect, though there may be some very short term impacts on your operations, that the long-term impacts can be mitigated by changing harvest schedules and other logistics.

During both the RARE II evaluation and the decisionmaking process, we very seriously considered the commodity factors involved. We determined the impact of alternative wilderness recommendations on timber sale offerings, developed and dispersed recreation, and wildlife. And there was a much more subjective consideration of the local impacts, where each Forest Supervisor determined whether these RARE II alternatives would prompt unacceptable adverse impacts on significant local industries or communities. And if this were the case, that was sufficient reason, in one step of the analysis, to kick an area out of the wilderness category.

On a national basis, we were able to recommend 15 million acres for wilderness designation, with only three communities bearing unmitigable adverse effects--one in Idaho, one in New Mexico, and another in Utah.

In California, where the RARE II process encompassed 1.7 million acres of commercial forest land, 288,000 acres of that have been recommended for wilderness, 882,000 acres allocated to nonwilderness, and 492,000 acres slated for further planning. Many of these commercial forest lands allocated to wilderness tend to be in rougher terrain, and with significant problems of logging access. The commercial forest lands allocated to nonwilderness are generally much more cost-effective for harvesting.



There has been some thought that setting aside wilderness areas would not reduce timber harvesting potential if the money that would have been spent to build roads into those areas were used instead for intensive management--to increase the harvest on the remaining lands. A study--called the Roadless Areas Tradeoff Study--was conducted to see if this were the case. Generally, the answer was no. The tradeoff would not work because of environmental and other multiple-use considerations.

Nationwide, the best baseline for judging the impacts of RARE II is our 1975 RPA program. As Joe McGrath--whom you will talk with later--pointed out in recent Senate hearings, the RPA planning process forces clear answers to the question, "Why is the Forest Service doing this?" It requires the Forest Service to say, "This is where we plan to go; this is how much it will cost; and these are the benefits that will result--now, and in the future."

And when we compare the 1975 RPA Recommended Program targets with the potential products and values from the RARE II proposals, we find that all program targets can be met or exceeded with the exception of sawtimber sales offerings.

Over the past three years, Forest Service timber sale offerings have average 11.5 billion board feet. Over the next three to five years, this timber sale program, if the further planning areas are included in the basis for the programmed harvest as they will be, and if Congress designates the wilderness we've recommended through RARE II, will be reduced by 150 million board feet of sawtimber and 25 million board feet of other products.

This fall-down is essentially in Alaska, with the "lower 48" states actually gaining 10 million board feet in the short-run.



If the recommendations are implemented, as proposed, and if areas allocated to nonwilderness become available on April 15 as planned, there will be about a 400 million board-foot fall-down from the 1985 mid-level RPA program target for timber in the "lower 48" states--about three percent of the projected sale program. This fall-down is due not only to placing commercial forest land into wilderness, but also to short-term problems with scheduling, road building, and technical limitations--such as those on additional harvesting in some drainages while maintaining water quality requirements.

One of the questions I've been asked quite frequently on Capitol Hill is, "What is the effect of RARE II on the cost of new housing?"

The answer is--It's insignificant. According to figures we have from the National Association of Homebuilders, about 41 percent of the cost of a new single-family dwelling in 1977 was construction cost. Only 17 percent of this construction cost was the softwood lumber and plywood component. As only 16 percent of the softwood comes from the National Forests, and as only 5 percent of the commercial forest lands in the National Forests would become wilderness under RARE II recommendations, the effect of RARE II on the cost of a new house is extremely small. It computes to about .15 percent--or fifteen cents out of every 100 dollars in the cost of a house.

This translates into very minor changes in the cost and availability of single family dwellings.

I've enjoyed being here with you this morning. It's given me an opportunity to assess the current status and probable impacts of our RARE II proposals. And, as you are, I'm looking forward to finding out what lies ahead for those proposals.